To all Rulers and Magistrates in England, *and all men in Authority, from the highest to the lowest, A few* Sober Words *tendred to your serious Consideration, which you are desired to read with Moderation.*

OH that you had an eye to see, and an ear to hear, and an heart to perceive and understand, in this your day, the things that belong to your everlasting peace, and also the things that make for peace amongst all men; and tend to the good, welfare, benefit, and prosperity of your selves, and all people that are under your Rule, Government and Authority, that you might consider your wayes and your doings, and know your work and your duty, in your several places, both towards God and towards man, that you might know the right way and the equal path, and walk therein, doing the things which ye ought to do, and which properly belongs to you, and which the Lord requires of you, in order to the conscionable discharge of your duty in your several places and capacities, thereby answering the righteous end of Government & Rule amongst men; and that you might forbear to intermeddle with those things which belong not to you, and which have no relation to your trust, nor was ever committed (or intended of God to be committed) to your management, that you might clearly see and discern those things which are the cause why the Lord (in all ages) hath turned his Hand against Kingdoms, Nations and People, and overthrown them in his Wrath, and brought them to desolation, after his long-suffering and patience hath been exercised towards them, in waiting for their repentance, and that your hands and hearts might be turned against such things, [illegible] and whereby the righteous God is provoked at this day; [illegible] and Authority might be exercised in the preventing, [illegible] those gross Evils and [illegible] your sight, and [illegible] cerning which, [illegible] that is in the Cause of his [illegible] his Fury [illegible]

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poured out, and his Judgments executed, though he ſuffer long; that ſo you might be a bleſſing in your day, to your ſelves and all that are under you, and that VVrath may be removed and turned away from You, and from the Nation, and the Judgments that have been executed, and the Fury that hath been poured out upon others, in the Juſtice of God, becauſe of ſuch things, and which may juſtly be expected by you, and which are indeed foreſeen to be coming, and are impending, may be diverted and removed, and that you might in all things anſwer the end for which Rule and Government was appointed, and for which Rulers and Magiſtrates are ordained.

Is not the Peace, Welfare, Proſperity, Quietneſs, Happineſs and Tranquillity of all People, the very Cauſe and End of the Inſtitution of all Rule, Authority and juſt Government amongſt men, that all men under it might live a peaceable and quiet life in all Godlineſs and Honeſty? that thereby the unruly might be ruled, and the diſorderly might be ordered and governed; and the injurious perſon might be prevented and hindred from doing injuriouſly, or puniſhed for the ſame; and that the peaceable and harmleſs might be protected in peace and quietneſs, and good men defended, countenanced and encouraged in well-doing?

And are not all good and juſt Laws as ſo many Pales, Fences or Bounds, to ſtand between the *Injurious* and the *Innocent*, between the *diſorderly* and the *orderly*, between the *Oppreſſor* and the *Harmleſs*, between the *Juſt* and the *Unjuſt*; that the one might not break over upon the other, to hurt, injure or deſtroy them in their Lives, Liberties, Perſons or Eſtates, but that all thereby might live in peace and quietneſs together? And are not ſuch good Laws made (or added) becauſe of tranſgreſſion, and becauſe of a tranſgreſſing nature in mankind, (begotten by the Devil in the Fall) which is not ſubject to the juſt and righteous Law of God, which ſaith, *Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye the ſame unto them*; and is it not becauſe of ſuch injurious men, and for ſuch lawleſs unrighteous evil-doers, who live in that faln ſtate and evil nature, and are not ſubject to the righteous Law of God written in their hearts, which requires them to love God above all, and their neighbours as themſelves; I ſay, is it not for ſuch that Laws are made? and is it not becauſe of ſuch, that Rule and Government amongſt men was appointed and ordained of God? elſe what uſe were there of it in the world? for they that

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are ſubject to the Law of God in their hearts, are thereby bound to peace and quietneſs, and taught to do to others as they would have others do to them, and ſo comes not under mans Law, (as to the condemning power thereof) though they conſent to it to be good and wholſome; neither doth the Law become a terror to them, but rather a protection and a defence, againſt ſuch as would injure them, harm them, or deſtroy them.

And is not this the end for which Rulers and Magiſtrates are appointed and ordained of God? and is not this their duty towards God and towards man, to uſe all diligence in their ſeveral places and capacities, to endeavour to maintain and keep up thoſe fences and bounds that are made between man and man; and in caſe of breach thereof, or any intrenchment thereupon, to endeavour the repair of ſuch breaches, and to ſtand with their Sword in the gap, between the injurious, and the innocent and harmleſs; turning the edge thereof againſt the evil-doer, for defence of the innocent? And is it not for this end that the Sword of Power and Authority is put into their hand, to terrifie and puniſh all ſuch unruly, diſorderly, injurious, unjuſt, unrighteous Peace-breakers, who will not otherwiſe be reclaimed from injuring and deſtroying ſuch as deſire to live at peace with all men, and to do to all men as they would be done unto? And is it not in the doing hereof, that Magiſtrates are ſaid to *Rule for God*, and *not to bear the Sword in vain*, as they turn the edge thereof (without reſpect of perſons) againſt ſuch men, and againſt ſuch things which are contrary to his righteous Law? and when they endeavour, as much as in them lieth, the preventing, and alſo the removing of thoſe things which are forbidden of him, and becauſe whereof his Wrath cometh and abideth on mankind, even until whole Kingdoms and great Nations periſh in his Wrath and are deſtroyed? And is it not a duty incumbent upon all Magiſtrates and men in Authority, in order to the faithful diſcharge of their Truſt committed to them of God, and concerning which they are accountable unto him? And is it not even their duty towards God, and towards man, to endeavour as much as in them lies, to ſtop and prevent all thoſe floods and ſtreams of ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs amongſt men, which even overflows, and runs down like a mighty River, whereby the holy Spirit of the Lord is grieved, and wherewith his righteous Soul is vexed from day to day? And is not this their work, and that which

the Lord requires of them? and if through their negligence or remiſneſs herein, or their countenancing or tolerating thereof, or winking thereat, the Lord be ſo long provoked until his Wrath break forth, and his Fury and Indignation be poured out upon ſuch who are under their Government, and for whom they are accountable, and they be deſtroyed in his Wrath; though they periſh in their ſins, yet, will not the Lord in juſtice require their blood at the hands of ſuch Rulers and Magiſtrates, who had power to prevent ſuch things which was the cauſe of their deſtruction, but did it not?

And ought not you ſeriouſly to conſider theſe things, and to walk ſo in your ſeveral places and capacities as that your conſciences may be clear in the ſight of God, and that you may be clear from the blood of all men? for ſurely you cannot but expect that the righteous God will deal righteouſly, and reward every one according to his deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil? And though he be a God long-ſuffering and of tender mercy, yet he will in no wiſe acquit the guilty; and may you not read this at large in holy Scriptures (*which were written afore-time for our learning, upon whom the ends of the world are come*) that though he ſuffered long the provocations of the wicked, yet at laſt (except they turned unto him by unfeigned repentance) his Wrath brake forth againſt them, and he overthrew and deſtroyed them in his fierce Anger and ſore Diſpleaſure, as the Land of *Egypt*, the Cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, and many other Kingdoms and Nations; and are not the ſame ſins which they were guilty of, and which was the cauſe of their overthrow, as great in theſe dayes as in theirs, and as abominable in the ſight of the Lord now as then, and cry as loud in the years of the Lord now as then; and is he not as greatly provoked thereby now as then? and may not his Wrath break forth, and his Judgments be executed, and his Fury be poured-out (in Juſtice) now as then? And is it not then your wiſdom to be conſiderate in theſe weighty matters, which are of ſuch great concernment to you, that you may find a hiding-place in the day when his Wrath is poured forth upon his Enemies?

And do you indeed judge that the moſt heinous crimes and crying ſins of theſe times, *is difference in Judgment about matters of Religion*; and that ſuch as differ from you in Judgment concerning matters of *Faith* and *Worſhip*, are the onely evil-doers? Do you believe and judge that People meeting together to wait upon the Lord, and to worſhip

worſhip him according to the perſwaſion of their conſciences, (though differing from you in judgment) is in it ſelf a ſin ſo heinous and a crime ſo great, as that it cryes in the ears of the Lord, and provokes him to VVrath? is this the heinous Abomination of the times? and are theſe the great Offenders againſt God and man, that above all others your eye is upon them, and your Sword drawn forth, and the edge thereof turned againſt them, though you have nothing againſt them of evil-doing, either againſt God or man, but only concerning the VVorſhip of their God, becauſe they differ from you in judgement concerning the way thereof? and yet muſt ſuch be look'd upon and accounted the greateſt tranſgreſſors, and undergo the greateſt ſtroak of your Power, as the chiefeſt Diſturbers of the Kingdomes peace, and the only Troublers of *Iſrael*? do you believe that this is according to the will of God, and that hereby you pleaſe him, and do that which is accepted of him, and that which he requires of you in order to the diſcharge of your Truſt and the clearing of your Conſciences? is this *ruling for God*, to turn your Sword againſt ſuch who live in his Fear, and endeavour *to keep a Conſcience void of offence towards God and towards all men*, only becauſe they cannot bow, nor conform to a way of your preſcribing, contrary to the perſwaſion of their conſciences, though in all lawful things they ſubmit to you, and are ſubject to your Authority, and live honeſtly and walk peaceably towards all men? Are there not very heinous crimes and crying ſins, yea great abominations againſt God, that are evidently and apparantly ſo, and which are not found by ſecret ſearch, but are manifeſtly known, and openly committed throughout the Land, and which none dare to plead for or juſtifie; which you cannot be ignorant of, neither can you be miſtaken, which doubtleſs you know is ſo in the ſight of God, and whereby he is greatly provoked? and ſhould it not be your care to endeavour a Reformation thereof, and to ſtop the currant thereof? Is this a time to be ſtriving with people and puniſhing them, about diſputable points of Religion, which you your ſelves have not an infallible judgment in, neither indeed doth it belong or appertain to your judgment, or relate to your truſt, it being the prerogative of Chriſt Jeſus, who alone is Judge in theſe caſes, and hath reſerved that power to himſelf, and not given it, or committed it unto any Ruler or Magiſtrate upon Earth, ſo as to force or compel any man, in things pertaining to the VVorſhip and Ser-

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vice of God, whom we are to hear and obey in all things, who is both King and Lawgiver to his People; I ſay, is this a time to be ſtriving about things which are diſputable, and to ſpend your time and imploy your ſelves about ſuch matters, when the Land even overflows with wickedneſs and abomination, which is evident and apparent, and concerning which you cannot doubt or queſtion, but that the Lord is provoked therewith, and which properly doth belong to you to look after, & to endeavour a reformation of? Would you not judg it great imprudence and indiſcretion in that Ship-maſter, whoſe Veſſel having ſprung a leak, whereby himſelf and all that are imbarqued with him are in danger to periſh in the Sea, that when his careful Mariners are diligently imployed in ſtopping the ſame for general preſervation, that even then at that time he ſhould be ſtriving and contending with them, and puniſhing of them, becauſe they differ from him in judgment about ſome diſputable points of Navigation (which he himſelf hath no certain knowledge of) in order to the bringing of their Ship to its deſired port, though peradventure his judgment be more erroneous than theirs, and ſo whilſt he is imploying his time about that which is then needleſs, and neglecting that which is abſolutely neceſſary to be done for their preſent preſervation, his Veſſel in the mean time even ſinks under him? And is not this a fit compariſon? and doth it not run parallel with the preſent caſe and ſtate of things at this day? and is it not more needful for you to endeavour to prevent thoſe dangers that are apparent, by endeavouring to ſtop thoſe floods of wickedneſs and unrighteouſneſs, which even overflows the Land, and which may endanger to ſink the whole Bottom (in which all your concernments are imbarqued) under the wrath of Almighty God? and would not this be more ſutable to your Truſt, and tend more to the diſcharging and clearing of your Conſciences, both towards God and man? And as for ſuch who differ from you in judgement, about Religion, Faith & Worſhip, it would be your wiſdom to follow wiſe *Gamaliel's* Counſel, and let them alone; for if the things about which you ſtrive with them be not of God, it will fall of it ſelf, and come to nothing, though you meddle not with it; but *if it be of God* (as ſurely it is) then *take heed what you do*, for you will never be able to deſtroy it, though you oppoſe it with all your Power, and therein be found fighters againſt God? neither will thoſe Laws by which you proceed againſt them, juſtifie your proceedings any more, than they

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were justified who proceeded against *Daniel*, the *three Children*, *Christ* himself, his *Apostles*, *Servants* and *Martyrs* in Ages past, who could all of them plead, they had Laws and Decrees for what they did, and many of them proceeding more according to those Laws then in being, than is done at this day; yet you your selves will condemn them for Persecutors and wicked men, and therein you judge rightly; and you may consider what was their end, and what they brought upon themselves by so doing, though many of them did it ignorantly, thinking thereby they did God service: And it would be more acceptable to God, and more honour to the King and better service to him, by all that are in Authority under him, to endeavour the stopping and preventing of Wickedness and Prophaness, that it might be removed out of the Land, that so his Throne might be established in Righteousness; than the putting of those Laws in execution against peaceable people about Religion, because they cannot submit to things contrary to the perswasion of their consciences.

Nevertheless, be this known unto you all, That whatsoever may be in your minds concerning us, or in the purpose of your hearts to do unto us, or to cause us to suffer upon this account, as you shall not thereby provoke us to render unto you evil for evil, or to move a hand against you, or any wayes practise or endeavour your hurt, ruine, overthrow or destruction, (though we are well assured that if you proceed against us, you will thereby provoke the Lord against your selves, and bring ruine upon your selves) yet our hand shall not be upon you, or against you, but rather pitty you, and pray for your conversion, and endeavour your good in what we may; neither shall all your hard dealing with us, and cruelty towards us, prevail with us to do any thing contrary to the perswasion of our Consciences, or to bow or conform to any thing which is against the righteous Law of God, and the Requiring of his Spirit in our hearts; for we will bow down unto the Lord, but we will not bow down unto another; neither shall we do any thing which is forbidden by your Laws, or omit the doing of any thing which is required by your Laws, out of wilfulness, stubbornness, pride, or contempt against your persons or authority, but shall submit unto you in all lawful things; only when your Laws come in competition with the Law of God in our Consciences, then judge you which we ought rather to obey; for if we sin against the Testimony of our Consciences, who then can give

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us peace? and whether it be not better for us in such cases to trust the Lord, and to fall into his hands than into yours? for if we are faithful unto him, and obey him in what he requires, he is able to deliver us out of your hands, and to restrain your wrath; but if we disobey him, by obeying you, and by submitting to your Commands, you cannot save us from the stroke of his Hand, nor deliver us from his Wrath; Therefore it is our firm resolution, and the purpose of our hearts (whatever the Lord may yet suffer you to do unto us, or inflict upon us) not at all to defile our Consciences by doing any thing which we are perswaded is contrary to his will; for we have counted the cost of this work, and are freely given up unto the Lord, to be disposed of at his pleasure, either in doing or suffering, it being his Cause and not our own, we being onely Instruments in his hand; so that the controversie is between you and God, and to him do we look, and commit our selves, and the keeping of our souls in well-doing, and leave it to him to plead our Innocency, and the Righteousness of this Cause with all that rise up against us. And this is written and tendred to your serious consideration, in that Love which would have none to perish in their gainsaying, but rather that all might turn from their wickedness and live.

By a lover of Peace, Righteousness, and Good-Government.

Robert Wastfeild.

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